



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
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April 28, 2009

To: Saint Paul Housing Owners and Interested Citizens

Fr: Bob Kessler, Director
Department of Safety and Inspections

Re: Uniform Egress Window Policy

The Department of Safety and Inspections recognizes that the various code requirements for egress windows are confusing and need clarity so that property owners will know what the requirements are when we inspect their properties.

An egress window is very important because it is a life safety means of escape from smoke and/or fire and other potential hazardous conditions. The Department of Safety and Inspections wants to emphasize the public safety of all residents by establishing the following uniform policy for the size of egress windows for residential housing.

Department of Safety and Inspection Egress Window Policy

The Minnesota State Fire Code, which has been adopted by the City of Saint Paul, applies to existing buildings when: 1) identified in specific sections of the fire code; and 2) when, in the opinion of the code official, a structure, facility or condition constitutes a distinct hazard to life and property. Minn. R. 7511.0102 (IFC 102.1).

Under the Minnesota State Fire Code, escape windows in existing buildings that were installed prior to April 11, 1983 must have a clear opening be at least 20 inches in width, 24 inches in height and 5 square feet of entire glazed opening area, with a finished sill height of no more than 48 inches. Minn. R. 7511.1026 (IFC 1026.1). Windows not meeting this requirement must be upgraded in order to satisfy the Minnesota State Fire Code.

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In addition, the Fire Marshal has declared that all escape windows with openings less than 20 inches in width, 24 inches in height and 5 square feet of entire glazed area with a finished sill height of no more than 48 inches to be a distinct hazard to life and property. (See Fire Marshal Steve Zaccard's Policy Memo, April 2009).

Window Policy:

Based on the Minnesota State Fire Code, windows in existing structures must have a clear opening be at least 20 inches in width, 24 inches in height **and** at least 5 square feet of entire clear glazed area, with a finished sill height of no more than 48 inches. In addition, replacement windows cannot be smaller than the originally approved windows, unless the originally approved windows exceed the current building code,

Exceptions:

The only exception to the above policy that may be granted by the Department of Safety and Inspections is for previously installed replacement windows that were installed under permit, inspected, and approved by the Department of Safety and Inspections prior to April 28, 2009.

Appeals:

Any window not meeting these specific requirements can appeal to the City Council via the City's Legislative Hearing Officer. The Council will consider the benefit to be obtained by complying with the fire marshal's orders and the effect on affordable housing, provided that the spirit of the code is complied with and public safety is secured. (Minn. Stat. § 299F.011, subd. 5b).

Please direct any questions regarding this policy to Mr. James Bloom, Building Code Official for the Department of Safety and Inspections. 651-266-9071